

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Pete Falcone, TSA

Type: Interview

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Special Access Issues: None

Team: 8

Participants (non-Commission): Christine Beyer, TSA general counsel's office

Participants (Commission): Miles Kara, Lisa Sullivan, and John Azzarello

Location: 9-11 Commission office at GSA building

Background

In 1985, he joined FAA as a Special Agent in the Field Office (CASFO) in Miami, Florida. He performed aircraft, airport inspections in the Caribbean and in South America. He was also trained as a federal air marshal. In 1989, he transferred to FAA security at headquarters. He was an aircraft/airline specialist. He worked as an airport specialist performing a similar role. He was a specialist at cat X airports. They were formed and commissioned after Pan Am 103. He was a policy staff member before he was Federal Security Manager. From about 1990 through 2001 he occupied position of manager at Headquarters of 20 category X airport Federal Security Directors. They were placed in the field but they reported to him at headquarters. He was a manager within ACO.

The crisis management process continued to evolve. The senior-most ACS or ACO-1 would direct response to crisis. This evolution led to more involvement of technical staff. A formal place at the table for them. Prior to that there was a bank of telephones occupied by public affairs personnel, chief counsel, the Administrator might become involved.

On 9-11

He was part of a response team that shared duties at night on or off-duty they were contacted by pager. They consulted on whether or not a communications network needed to be established and people needed to go to the ACC (Aviation Command Center), located on the 10th floor of the FAA Headquarters. Most instances did not require full

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operation of Headquarters ACC. Those that did require it were actual hijackings and it was unquestioned that all would report.

His immediate supervisor was Lee Longmire. General Mike Canavan was his boss. Claudio Manno reported to Pat McDonnell at the time.

It was fairly well established who would report to ACC during off-hours. During business hours, people were designated: "Watch Standers"

Mike Wiekert, Bob McLaughlin, etc, they got the call from Claudio Manno and they were tasked with starting up the nets.

What factors prompted the renovation of the ACC?

There was a general sense of need to formalize response; make it more in depth, give technical people at skill level (bomb detection people) a place at the table. There were no computers at the ACC before the renovation. Prior to that, he was comfortable with the old system from headquarters and field perspective.

The most significant event prior to WTC was the TWA 800 crashed in New York. That was in 1996, he thinks. That was the old system.

Do you recall a Lufthansa hijacking in 1993?

Yes. The man had a weapon concealed in his hat. He recalled that. He was at the Command Center at that time.

There were hijackings that came in to Miami, FLA. Generally, when the perpetrator got off the plane he would kiss the ground.

Generally speaking, the principle would be in charge of the ACC.

He was at Headquarters on his office in the 3rd floor. Bob McLaughlin ran into his office and said "there's been a hijacking out of Boston – report to the 10th floor." He was running and breathless.

He called the cell phone of Steve Luongo, his Federal Security Manager at Logan. He was picking up radio reports in his car. He disputed that the plane was hijacked; he had information that the plane had crashed. He told Luongo to get to the airport as soon as possible.

Falcone went to the tenth floor and took his pre-determined location. He took his seat at the tactical net line. Chuck Guffy was the event recorder. He took notes on everything he said that day. He has seen the logs from the tactical net that day.

All of the other positions in the room were able to monitor the tactical and the primary nets that day.

Was your line 5100?

He does not know what the extension was.

Azzarello showed him the excerpt of the tactical net log we received from Tracy Paquin. The primary net might not have been tracked.

Weikert was the "mastermind of the system."

He was not asked to review the logs of what was logged in. He has no idea what was put in compared to what he said.

He was entering things that Falcone gave him to enter; slips of paper.

Falcone was getting calls patched to him from flight standards people; security people; air traffic was pumped in from various centers; regional and local people;

When he got up to the ACC, the Center was already up. The line was already live. All Falcone had to do was take the seat. HE was focused on his area of responsibility. He was responding to request.

He thinks that when he arrived, Lee Longmire was in charge. People were having conversations such as Jeff Griffith was in and out a bit. Monty Belger was prominent. HE doesn't recall seeing the Administrator. He doesn't recall if someone was in charger, per say.

When he got there, he saw the hole in the North tower. It was already on the CNN. The first question was whether or not it was a large air craft; a passenger carrying aircraft. Some were reporting it was a small aircraft. These were second hand and preliminary reports.

Al Grazer, a high ranking Port Authority official, told Region in NY that it was in fact a small plane. That information was percolating in the ACC.

He does not recall if he drew a connection between the initial report of a hijacking and the report on CNN a plane had hit the WTC. There were a number of ATC people reporting things. How he was hearing information; he doesn't recall.

There were reports that the plane had disappeared off the screen.. the radar.

There was no certainty about where any planes were in the system that day.

John Azzarello showed him the eastern region operations center log.

They spent some time on the phone trying to figure out if it was a passenger jet. His general impression is that the log shown to him is "out of sync." People were frustrated at Headquarters because there were demands put

We were asked to make determinations that were beyond our ability to make. The Deputy Administrator was yelling in the room, "Some one has to know – find out – make a call – there has to be a witness - To find out what airplane hit the Pentagon."

He thinks he saw Fran Lozito. She was working air carrier issues. She was on a completely different wavelength than him.

Doesn't know what the information manager's role was that day; or who it was. The information manager oversaw the activation of the tactical and the primary net and initiated activation of additional nets. He doesn't know who that was.

The person he directed information to was the director. Writing things down; hand things off to people.

It was a bureaucratic role. The duties and responsibilities required that he step down from a mid level manager's function into a communications/operational position. He was not making management decisions.

In the old system, Lynn Osmus was the key – everyone directed there eyes upward. Whereas on 9-11, the dais had a huddle of people on it. There were lots of people that popped up on the call.

Was there a shift between ACS to an AT operation?

No. Not the way he would characterize it.

"Herndon was in essence running the air space at that time. There were decisions made outside of the security process."

Falcone does not know when he heard a ground stop being called.

He does not know who Doug Davis is.

Azzarello told him that they had heard the Canoles telcon sent runners to the ACC to keep up on the information. Falcone doesn't remember "runners." They could have easily enough been patched in to the tactical net. There was no need for pieces of information. It is completely unknown information.

It was a fairly regimented and bureaucratic system of reporting information. He does not know where Command Center Herndon fit in. He said that Herndon played an active role in managing the air space certainly with regards to shutting down the air space.

World view of the National Air Space. They would be able to see the status of any aircraft, notwithstanding the tracking of the aircrafts.

His recollection is that there was no real communications between Command Center and the ACC.

When you assumed tactical net, position #3, had you heard about a second plane hijacked?

He remembers they were tracking planes that were no longer displaying transponder. There was a major focus on planes that had deviated from their flight paths.

It is the first time he has sat with anyone and talked about 9-11 in depth.

He thinks he just sat there and watched the second plane hit the tower.

At that time, had you heard about a second plane in distress?

Yes, there was concern about aircrafts that were off their course. And ATC was trying to raise them.

There could have been a specific report that a plane was hijacked.

He thought the worst when he saw the image of the smoking north tower. He is not sure if he heard a report of a second hijacking before watching the second plane.

The TSD was in the room. It was not prominently displayed. It could have been thrown up on the larger screen. The control for TSD was at position #1.

There was a video board that showed the logs that were being created (he thinks). A white board on September 11 was replaced eventually by a computer screen. At any rate, that board was where people looked for information such as numbers of flights, numbers of passengers.

Two crashes now in NY. What was your mindset at the point? What were you thinking of the cause? He wasn't formulating thoughts on conspiracy. He was absolutely thinking "intentional act." Did anyone make effort in the room to coordinate search through the ATC system of other aircrafts in distress.

There was simultaneous reports were coming in from the various centers. Some controllers were unable to contact centers. It was endemic in proportions.

Directions were given to centers to canvas flights. There was a tasking to find out about planes that were off course. He does not believe that Lee Longmire directed that effort.

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He was making little notes on a pad, for example. Flight numbers and the company – trying to keep some semblance of order treating the report as another possible event.

He does not remember with great detail specific reports he heard that day. Regarding a report that AAL 11 was still heading toward DC after the crashes in NY, he does not remember that.

Reports that “we were under siege” were coming in.

There were reports over the Midwest that we were tracking from time to time. 9-11 calls from dispatchers that had information from people on board the planes. He thought that anything was possible at that point.

There were reports that a plane was heading toward the White House. There was report of a fire on the Mall.

Darryl Smith in ACI got the first report in the Scif from Boston.

TAC Net Line 5114 - Darryl says they are activating the ACC upstairs – 9:09 AM

Played portions of the tac net – Falcone

Dominick Festa – NY Center

People in the scif were dialing in to the tac net.

9:20 FBI Bauer was on the tac net. Does that surprise you?

Falcone does not have a sense that was unusual. The purpose of it was for internal use only.

He tried to reach NMCC. He couldn't reach them. That was surprising to him. He said that he should have asked for a roll call when he got on the net. He did not know when military was notified

It sounds like a bridge with multiple lines coming in. who is keeping the line open.

He was cognizant of the fact had a lost airplane that had no known target. He does not remember those conversations from line 5114.

Marcus Arroyo? Arroyo is saying it lost UAL 175 over Indiana. Falcone confirms that Marcus was the regional officer was from ATC. He was trying to figure out the source of the information. He wanted to know if ATC was the source.

Falcone was taken the information from Arroyo and putting it in the log;

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The person that mentions runners was possibly Darryl Smith, ACI.

Did you make effort off-line to bring UAL 93 information about a bomb on board to the attention of other people in the room. There was a report from the Oak Brook PD that people on the flight were shot.

Falcone thinks that if he was on his net he would have verified it when the representative from Command Center said they were ordering a nation wide ground stop.

FAA Command Center Washington – Wanted to verify it -

Falcone does not remember hearing the announcement that a plane flew into the west side of the Pentagon.

FAA Tac net to eastern region – got the information about the Pentagon.

9:41 - Cleveland Center said he has a bomb on board UAL 93. UAL 93 airborne over Cleveland reports that there is a bomb on board center FBI Boston gets information about UAL 93 from Command Center.

Tac net to Air Traffic Command – 9:43 AM – Anything further on 93? No.

He doesn't remember specifically what he was tasked with. Some things were seemingly unimportant. People at the ACC were asking for updates. The white board was going. All suspect crafts were posted there.

9:43 three crashes, and the report of the UAL 93. Delta 1989 was reported as a hijack. What was going on in the room at that time?

There was a general awareness of that plane as it is being discussed. There were concerns about tracking the flight the likelihood that it was looping back. The event at the pentagon we were still trying to figure out what aircraft was involved in that. New information was stacking up. The aftermath of the other events was significant.

He does not recall the TSD being used at this time for UAL 93. The intelligence organization within FAA was driving a lot of the reporting at that time. How many people, what type of weapons, etc.

He was collecting information and trying to keep people appraised of most accurate information. He could not identify a single point

"We were not decision makers. They were not in the room. They were next door or somewhere else."

"I can't overstate the frustration I felt being a part of the situation that day."

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The MOC was a room intended for leadership to monitor the conferences in the ACC. The decision makers were outside of the intensity in order to make rational decisions. He doesn't think that worked, either.

Griffith says to the Command Center in Herndon we need to get information to all the folks in the field to report anything unusual to headquarters.

The first thing John White says is that he has one of those for Griffith: American 77.

Griffith was on the phone... He may have been in the ACC temporarily. He was not in the room the whole time.

Falcone thought there was a video recording in the room. It might have been kept.

ACC Director at Headquarters was determining that emergency evacuations and LEOs were able to fly. The big job was to keep the queue informed. He was expediting requests. The situation shifted from the immediate flights to the flights coming over from abroad.

TSD is available in the ACC. To the extent it was referred to, he doesn't know.

He was not looking at anyone else. He was only referring to the "leader" and also the person taking the tac net log. He thinks the leader was most likely Lee Longmire.

He is going to assume that there was no primary net. Updating and energizing the other agencies involved was the job of the primary net. This was good, this wouldn't be on the primary net. FBI was the only agency checking in.

The primary net – NMCC was supposed to be on it; the White House Situation Room would have been on it. The guy behind him would have heard everything.